PROMENADE

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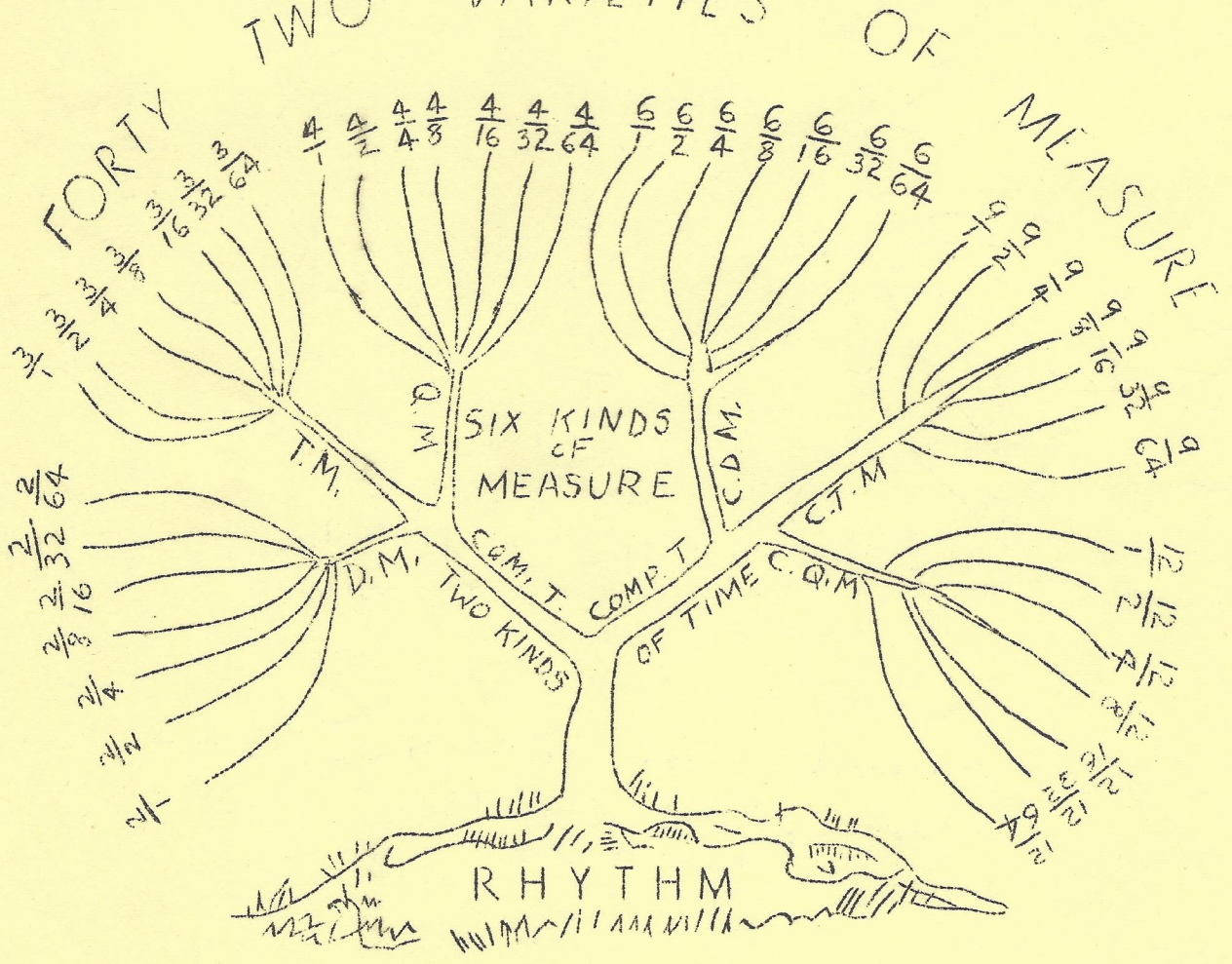
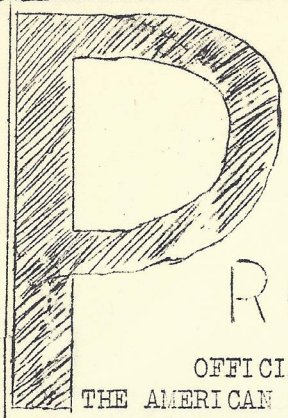


The American Square Dance Group

MARGOT MAYO, Director

NEW YORK, N.Y.



"The purpose of the American Square Dance Group is to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama and general Americana which together comprise American folk culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color or social position; to cooperate with those who hold similar views."

Constitution of the A. S. D. G.

PROMENADE

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SHAPE-NOTE HYMNS

Religious music has played an important role in the development of our country. Ever since the days of the earliest colonies, psalms and hymns have not only been the spiritual inspiration of our fellow countrymen, but also a chief means of recreation in many regions.

The Pilgrims and Puritans loved to sing during their church services and in their homes. In the old days, as now, informal gatherings were enlivened by singing, and the people naturally sang the songs they knew and loved. One story that has come down through the years tells of the departure of the Pilgrim fathers from Delft-Haven. They faced an uncertain future as well as separation from loved ones. Before leaving, the adventurers "refreshed themselves, after tears, with singing of psalms, making joyful melody in their hearts as well as with voice, there being many of the congregation very expert in music."

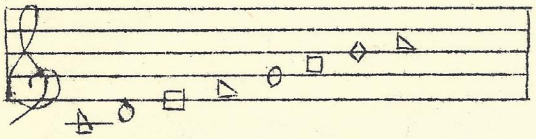
The early settlers brought with them their psalters, the Ainsworth, Sternhold And Hopkins, the Este, and probably others. Around 1690, the American colonists printed their own book of psalms with tunes, The Bay Psalm Book. Earlier editions of this book, reputedly the first book to be printed in the colonies, had provided the words, translated by some thirty learned gentlemen in the vicinity of Boston. No tunes were included. The colonists often visited in one another's homes, singing their psalms and probably indulging in a spot of local gossip. Ben Franklin tells in his Autobiography, of his father playing the psalm tunes on his fiddle.

Gradually, however, the repertoire of the congregations became very limited. The scarcity of printed melodies resulted in having to rely upon the memories of the individual members of the congregation. Many tune variations came about in this way and caused confusion. The situation became unbearable, and the worthy pillars of the various churches were convinced that something must be done, hence the introduction of the famous singing schools during the early part of the 18th Century. These "schools" were organized to teach the inhabitants of the far-scattered colonies how to read music, and to standardize and increase the number of hymn-tunes to be used in homes and church services. The singing-schools achieved great popularity, despite opposition from some oldsters, who bitterly fought such "radical" departures from the accepted traditions. The singing-schools became the center of social activities and their popularity continued, in more remote regions, until well into the 20th Century. The singing-gatherings, which are held during the summer months in some of our Southern states, might be considered the Twentieth Century version of the old singing school.

The shape-note system of musical notation, introduced into the singing-schools at the beginning of the 19th Century, is still used today and offers a fascinating field for study. The early system, of four different shapes to represent the notes of the scale, is generally understood to have been introduced by William Smith and William Little in their collection of hymns entitled in its entirety, "The Easy Instructor, or a New Method of Teaching Sacred Harmony, containing the Rudiments of Music on an improved plan wherein the Naming and Timing of the Notes are familiarized to the Weakest Capacity." This little oblong book has an introduction (under the heading "Advertisement") written by the authors

(continued on next page)

(Shape-note Hymns -continued)
which is dated, "Philadelphia, August 15, 1798." The New Method introduced the use of the following shapes for recognizing musical notes: △ for Faw; ○ for Sol; □ for Law; and ◇ for Mi. These symbols were placed upon the regular five line staff and the C scale, then, would look like this:



The itinerant singing-school masters traveled from settlement to settlement, holding school sessions that usually lasted for two weeks. At the end of this period, the "Scholars" could sing three and four part music, beat time, and in some cases would receive a diploma with which to decorate their walls. As the demand for more singing-schools developed, the teachers compiled their own books and developed their own systems of shaped note notation. Today, in the South, the four-shaped note system is still used, and is called "fa-so-la" singing. A seven note system using the familiar do, re, mi scale, is also very popular. This system has a different shape for each of the seven notes of the scale.

There is not space enough in this article to enter into any detailed description of shaped-note hymns and the strange and exciting music they represent. Not all of them, by any means, are of a religious nature. Many of the hymn tunes which have come down to us through the generations, were shameless and outright borrowings of secular folk tunes and words. In many cases, dance tunes were employed and modified to suit the rhythmic requirements of the songs. These songs can now be classified as folk songs, not only because they were the songs the people knew and sang, but because many of them, through the years, have undergone the usual changes and acquired the numerous variations that are traditionally associated with folk music.

For city folk who like to sing choral music, these hymns and early songs offer an almost untouched source of interesting and unusual three and four part songs. The amazing combinations of parallel fifths, fourths and octaves, and the open harmonies are invitingly modern. These old hymns and "fuguing tunes" are not slow, lugubrious laments; they are vigorous, spirited songs of triumph and supplication. Young people enjoy singing them today, even as they did in the old singing-schools where the tuition fee consisted of room and board, food and fuel for the teacher.

Much of the music we sing in our American Square Dance Group chorus is unavailable in general, having been taken from rare, old songsters or collected from folk singers themselves. However, music publishing houses are becoming aware of the appeal of the early American music and are gradually making some of it available in modern editions. Beware, however, of arrangements and "prettified" editions! Some modern musical editors simply cannot resist the temptation of "correcting" the original music, of making it agree with accepted rules of harmony. These songs are so truly representative of the settlers themselves that they cannot be refined any more than the pioneers would have allowed themselves to be changed to conform to present day standards of etiquette. Much of the charm of early music lies in its naivety and roughness! Modern arrangements tend to sissify the tunes, and they become trite and commonplace. The original music has remained, through all these years, as alive and exhilarating as in the days when Billings, Read, and Shumway were busily composing tunes for Watts' psalms and hymns.

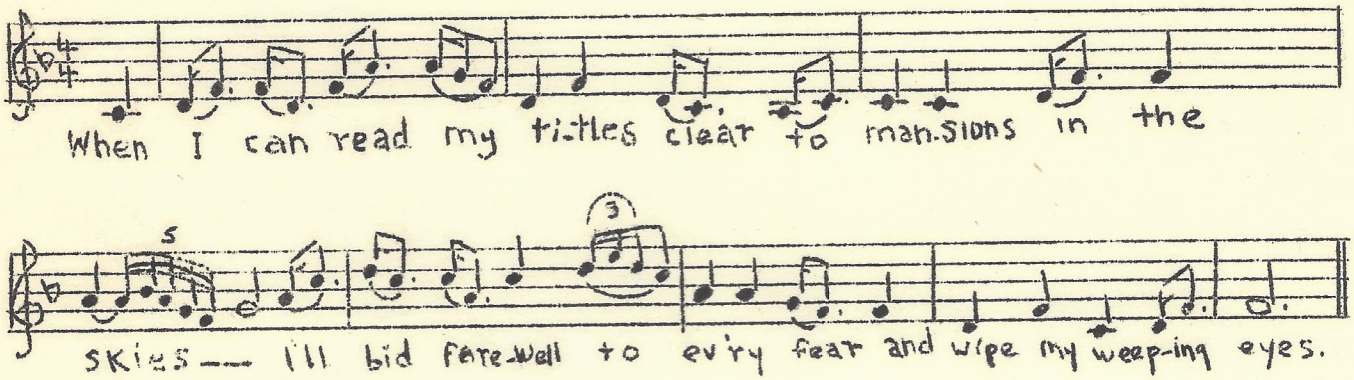
For those who wish to learn more about this phase of Americana we are including a list of books which are most helpful in this study.

1. White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands... George Pullen Jackson
2. Spirituals... George Pullen Jackson
3. White and Negro Spirituals... George Pullen Jackson
4. The story of the American Hymn... Edward S. Ninde
5. The Puritan and Music... Percy Scholes
6. Early New England Psalmody... Hamilton C. Macdougall
7. Three Centuries of American Hymnody... Henry W. Foote
8. Buckwheat Notes... George Pullen Jackson... Musical Quarterly XIX No. 4: Oct. 1933
9. The Easy Instructor...Frank J. Metcalf Musical Quarterly XXIII No. 1... Jan. 1937
10. Contrapuntal Style in Three-Voice Shape-Note Hymns... Charles Seeger... Musical Quarterly XXVI, No. 4: Oct. 1940

Margot

WHEN I CAN READ MY TITLES_ _

This version of the folk hymn was collected by Margot Mayo from the singing of Mrs. Lulu Crisp and Mr. Farmer Howell of Allen, Ky. The original text by IsaacWatts has been retained almost word for word in the first four stanzas of this version. We have discovered no trace of the author of the other verses; although they are printed in the Sweet Songster, published in 1854 by E. W. Billups, we find that Billups claims the entire poem as his own!



1) When I can read my titles clear,
to mansions in the skies
I'll bid farewell to every fear
and wipe my weeping eyes.

2) Should earth against my soul engage
and fiery darts be hurl'd
Then I can smile at Satan's rage
and face a frowning world.

3) Let cares like a wild deluge come
and storms of sorrow fall
So I but safely reach my home,
my God, my Heaven, my All.

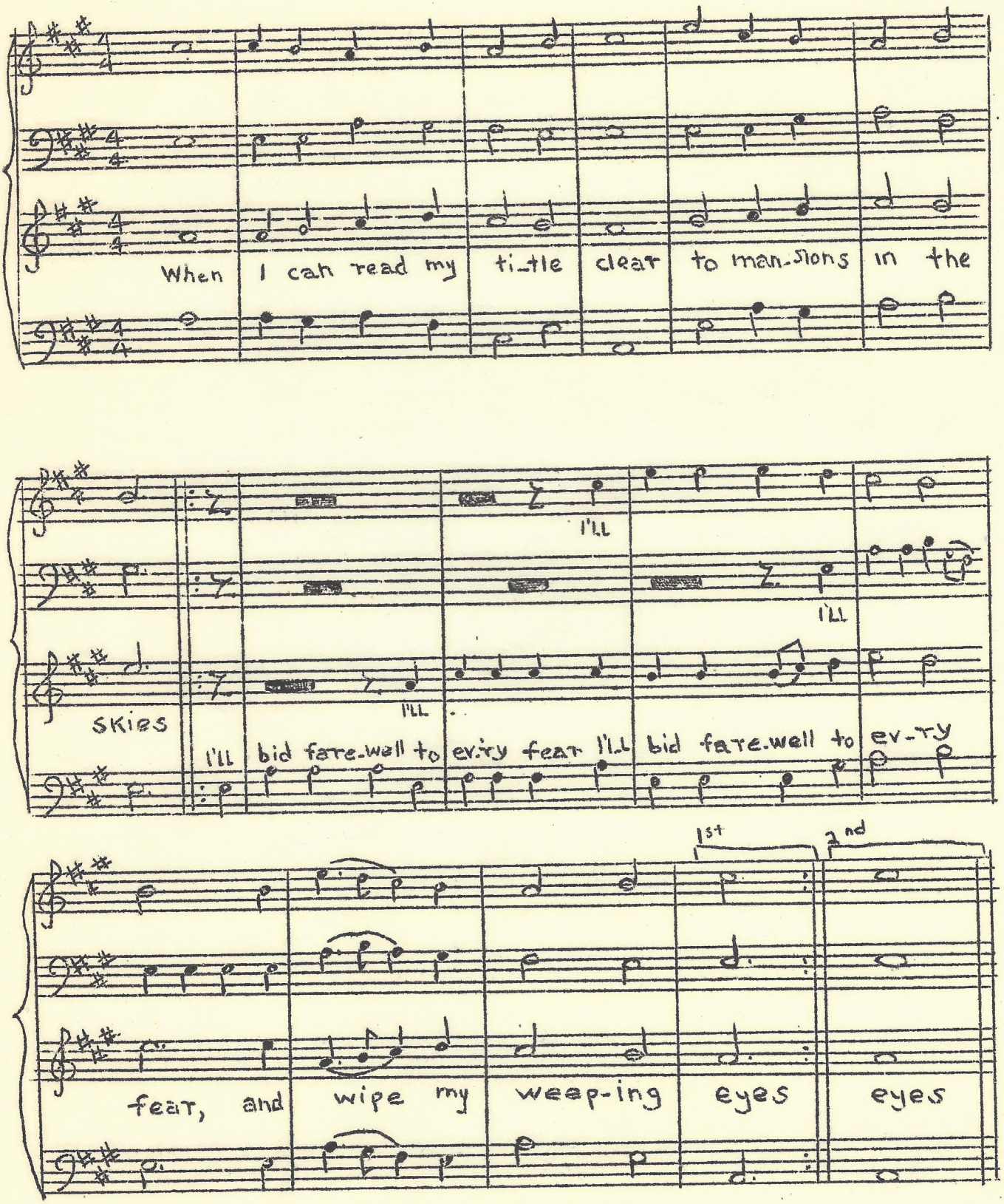
4) There shall I bathe my weary soul
in seas of heavenly rest
And not a wave of trouble roll
across my peaceful breast.

5) Farewell to earth and earthly things,
in vain they tempt my stay
Come angels spread your joyful wings
and bear my soul away.

6) We there shall ever sing and tell
the wonders of His grace
While heavenly raptures fire our hearts
and smile on every face.

7) Forever His dear sacred name
shall dwell 'a-pon' our tongue
And Jesus and salvation be
the theme of every song.

NINETY-FIFTH



No one seems to know just where or how the "Ninety-Fifth" acquired its title. It appears as hymn 65 in Watts' "Second Book of Hymns" under the title "Hope of Heaven." The text is not based on the Ninety-

(continued on next page)

fifth Psalm. Perhaps in some early collection of religious music, this all-time favorite appeared as the ninety-fifth song; until more research is done on this fuguing-tune, we'll have to accept its title and simply sing the song for the pleasure of singing it. This popular humn has appeared in practically every shape-note hymnal that has been publiched during the last hundred years.

The earliest collection in which we have found this fuguing-tune is the Repository of Sacred Music, by John Wyeth. The second part of this collection was published in 1813, in Harrisburgh. In this book, the Music of the Ninety-fifth is attributed to Chapin, but in most of the others it is either anonymous or credited to Colton. Very little is known about either of these early composers. The American Supplement of Grove's Dictionary lists a Nathan Chapin who published a collection called Musical Instructor in 1810, in collaboration with Joseph Dickerson.

Dr. Isaac Watts, the author of the text, was born in 1674 and died in 1748. An English clergyman, Watts was one of the most prolific of authors of sacred poems. He is also remembered as the author of many poems for children. "The Voice of the Sluggard," "How Doth the Little Busy Bee," and the lullabye "Hush, my Child, Lie Still and Slumber" among the best loved of his poems. The lullabye has been set to many tunes, and has become a genuine folk song.

The melody or shape-note hymns will be found in the tenor part on the third staff. In many cases, however, women joined in singing the men's parts, while men with high voices sang either the soprano or the alto parts. You will have to arrange this little matter to suit your singers.

JOHN A. LOMAX

The adventures of one important ballad-hunter are at an end, for John A. Lomax, the dean of American folklorists, died recently in his native state of Mississippi. He had made the trip to Greenville from his home in Dallas to attend festivities celebrating his 80th birthday.

According to reports, Mr. Lomax was entertaining friends in his hotel room, and had just finished singing a ballad when he lapsed into unconsciousness. What a fitting ending to a story-book life -- a finale, we feel sure, that would have pleased this recorder of folksongs, if he could have foreseen this postscript to his autobiography.

The genealogical tree of the family of American folklorists has some mighty sturdy roots. John Lomax was one of the most tenacious of them all, for he went deep into the lives and hearts of his people. His work is too well known to need listing here, for his books of folk songs are among the most popular of all collections, and his work with the Folklore Archives of the Library of Congress has been an inspiration to hundreds of folklore collectors. The art of gathering folklore is so young in this country that each pioneer in the field seems to be a personal friend. We'll miss John Lomax.

A SQUARE DANCE MEDLEY

The purpose of a square dance medley es to keep the dancers on their toes and thereby increase their skill. We find it a lot of fun, too, but we don't pretend that it's an authentic dance. A square dance medley lends variety and livliness to any evening of square dancing so here is one by Johnny O'Leary and Joe Raben.

CALLS

Introduction

Honor partners, corners same
All join hands going down the lane.

Halfway and cut right back, round you go on a different track

Sets ready.

First Couple:

First couple out to the right
Circle four with all your might

A) Swing your opposite lady
Now your own sweet honey baby

On to the next and circle four
Repeat A

On to the last and circle four
Repeat A

Lead on home aid everybody swing
Promenade around the ring

Second Couple:

Second gent out to the right, swing your maw
Now your paw, now old Arkansas

On to the next and swing your sister-in-law
Then your brother-in-law, then old Arkansas

On to the last and swing your old grandmaw
Now old grandpaw, then home and swing old Arkansas
Everybody swing and promenade the ring.

Third Couple:

Third couple out to the right and circle four.

B) Duck for the oyster, dive for the clam
Pass right through to the promised land.

On to the next and circle four.
Repeat B

On to the last and circle four.
Repeat B

Lead on home and everybody swing your own
Promenade round to place

Fourth Couple:

C) Fourth lady out to the right
Swing old Adam, now Miss Eve,
Then old Adam before you leave.
Home and swing your own.

On to the next
Repeat C

On to the last
Repeat C

Swing your corner like swinging on a gate
And now your own and don't be late.
Promenade her one and all, promenade around the hall.
Take her home, you know where and I don't care.

DESCRIPTION

Introduction:

Each gent faces his partner, bows briefly, then faces the lady on his left, who is his corner lady, and bows once more. All join hands and circle to the left, stopping halfway around the set, then they circle back to the right, ending at their original places.

First Couple:

The first couple goes out to the couple on their right. They join hands with the second and circle to the left. The two gents swing with the opposite ladies, and then they swing their own partners. The first couple continues on to the other couples in turn and repeats the same figure with each. They then go back to their original places and everybody swings their own. All promenade the set.

Second Couple:

The second gent goes out to the couple on the right and swings that lady, then he swings her partner, and returning to place, he swings his own partner. He repeats this with the other two couples. Then they all swing and promenade once around the set.

Third Couple:

The third couple circles four with the fourth couple. The fourth couple raises its joined hands, forming an arch, and the third couple, without breaking the circle, passes under this arch a step or two and then back into place (B). The third couple now forms the arch, and the fourth couple passes under and back. The fourth couple forms an arch once more, and this time the third couple pass completely through and on to the next couple. The third couple repeats the entire figure with each of the other couples in turn.

Fourth Couple:

The fourth lady goes out to the couple on the right and swings the first gent, then she swings his partner, then she swings the same gent again. The active lady returns home and swings her own partner. This same figure is repeated with all the other couples. Each gent will swing the lady on his left, who is his "corner" lady and then swings his partner. Promenade round the set once and return to the ladies' place.

NOTICE

Promenade is putting out Volume Three in a series of booklets containing songs and dances. This volume will feature eight dances including six squares and two quadrilles, several pieces of square dance music, and also a few songs. If you would like a copy, write to us. They are 50¢ each.